

Message Text

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QUOTE

UNCLAS LA PAZ 2483

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FOLLOWING IS TRANSLATION OF EDITORIAL IN CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC
PRESENCIA OF LA PAZ 2 APRIL 1977 UNDER TITLE "U.S. NARCOTICS
TRAFFICKERS"

"ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR NEWSPAPER COLUMNS IN THE U.S. CONTINUES
TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE SITUATION OF SOME THIRTY U.S. CITIZENS
ARRESTED FOR HAVING COMMITTED CRIMES AGAINST THE NARCOTICS LAWS
IN BOLIVIA. THE COLUMN ATTEMPTS TO PROTRAY THEM AS VICTIMS OF
REPRESSION THAT BORDERS ON A VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. FOR
THAT REASON IT IS, NOT OUT OF THE QUESTION THAT EVEN THE U.S.
SENATE MAY DISCUSS THE MATTER IN CONNECTION WITH LIMITATIONS
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ON GRANTING FOREIGN AID.

"IT IS WORTHWHILE THAT WE CONSIDER THIS MATTER, SINCE THE PREVIOUSLY
MENTIONED COLUMN, THOUGH RECOGNIZING SOME OF THE REALITIES,
SEEMS IN FACT TO BE DEMANDING PRIVILEGED TREATMENT FOR U.S.
PRISONERS.

"ABOVE ALL, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE CAMPAIGN TO STOP NARCOTICS CRIMES HAS ITS ORIGIN IN AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT IN WHICH THE U.S. PARTICIPATES. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS REALIZED THE HARM ITS OWN PEOPLE CAN SUFFER IF THE PROCESSING AND TRAFFICKING OF NARCOTICS IS NOT CONTROLLED AND PUNISHED AS IT SHOULD BE. THIS CONDUCT OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT BE CENSORED; ON THE CONTRARY, IT MERITS PRAISE. IT MERITS PRAISE EVEN AS WE RECOGNIZE THE ANXIETY AND SUFFERING OF THE PARENTS OF THE PRISONERS.

"WE OUGHT TO BEGIN BY RECOGNIZING TWO DEFECTS: THE LAW ON NARCOTICS IS EXTREMELY HARSH, PROBABLY HARSHER THAN IS NECESSARY TO PUNISH THESE DANGEROUS CRIMES. THE LAW IMPLIES THE COMMON MISTAKE OF BELIEVING THAT IT IS SUFFICIENT TO INCREASE THE SEVERITY OF THE PENALTY IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A GOOD POLICY OF CONTROL AND CRIME PREVENTION. BESIDES, IT IS ALSO EVIDENT THAT OUR JUSTICE IS SLOW: THAT IS A TOPIC CONSTANTLY ADDRESSED IN OUR COUNTRY.

"NEITHER OF THE TWO DEFECTS IMPLIES DENIAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS. THERE HAS BEEN NO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST U.S. CITIZENS QUAA U.S. CITIZENS; THEY ARE IN THE SAME CONDITION AS BOLIVIAN PRISONERS. FURTHERMORE, ONE OUGHT TO BEAR IN MIND THAT THE HARSHNESS OF THE LAW IS DUE IN LARGE MEASURE TO INTERNATIONAL OPINION THAT SAW IN BOLIVIA A PERMANENT SOURCE OF SUPPLY OF COCAINE. BUT THIS ARGUMENT IS ABSURD, AS WOULD BE THE CASE SHOULD WE SAY THAT THE U.S. DOES NOT RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS SIMPLY BECAUSE SOME OF ITS LAWS ESTABLISH FOR CERTAIN CRIMES PUNISHMENT THAT, ACCORDING TO BOLIVIAN CRITERIA, IS EXTREME.

"ON THE OTHER HAND, THE JAILS ARE IN BAD CONDITION FOR EVERYBODY.
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WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WE OUGHT TO BUILD JUST ONE, WITH ALL THE MODERN CONVENIENCES, FOR FOREIGN PRISONERS ALONE WHILE RESERVING THE WORST FOR OUR OWN CITIZENS. MOREOVER, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT IN THE U.S. AS WELL THERE ARE PRISONS IN WHICH, DESPITE MATERIAL COMFORTS--NOT UNIVERSALLY EXTANT--TREATMENT IS HARSH. IT IS SUFFICIENT TO REFER TO WHAT THE PENOLOGISTS OF THAT COUNTRY THINK IN THIS RESPECT.

"WE RECEIVE ALL FOREIGN VISITORS WITH UTMOST CORDIALITY; WE WELCOME THEM; BUT THOSE WHO COME HERE TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES WITH NARCOTICS, STIMULATE THEIR PROCESSING AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR TRAFFICKING, WE MUST DEAL WITH THOSE PERSONS ACCORDING TO OUR LAWS: THEY MUST CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTIONS BEFOREHAND.

"WE OUGHT TO ALSO TAKE NOTE OF ANOTHER POINT WHICH PERHAPS SERVES TO MAKE JOURNALISTIC DEMAGOGY, THE QUOTING OF PRISONER'S COMPLAINTS AS IF THIS CONSTITUTED SUFFICIENT PROOF. LET US LEAVE TO ONE SIDE THE POSSIBILITY OF POLICE ABUSE SINCE, EVEN IF IT HAS OCCURRED, IT IS THE RESULT OF PERSONAL ATTITUDES, WHICH OCCURS ALL OVER THE WORLD,

BUT IS NOT THE RESULT OF NATIONAL POLICY. IN NO WAY CAN THE
DENUNCIATIONS OF PRISONERS OR THEIR PARENTS BE PRESENTED AS INDIS-
PUTABLE TRUTH.

". THE PRISONERS ARE ALSO SUBJECTED TO ORDINARY JUSTICE, AS IS ANY
BOLIVIAN, WITH RIGHT TO DEFENSE. WE DO NOT THINKG THAT IT HAS
HAPPENED -- AT LEAST -- AS A RULE -- THAT OUR LAWYERS HAVE CHARGED,
HUGE HONORARIA (FAT FEES, IN THE ORIGINAL) FOR HAVING DONE NOTHING.
WHAT HAPPENS IS THAT, MANY TIMES, IT IS DIFFICULT TO DO ANYTHING
BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE ACTS AND THE EVIDENCE WHICH EXISTS
AGAINST THE PRISONERS.

"WE DO NOT WISH FOR THEM PUNISHMENT WHICH WOULD APPEAR TO BE A
KIND OF 'ADVERTISED VENGEANCE' OR PUBLIC VINDICTIVENESS. WE ARE
SORRY ABOUT THE SITUATION OF ALL PRISONERS, NATIONAL AND FOREIGN;
WE HAVE NO REASON TO WISH THEM ILL. BUT THERE SHOULD BE NO MIS-
UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THEIR ACTS, AND THOSE WHO FIND THEMSELVES IN
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OUR PRISONS FOR SUCH REASONS SHOULD NOT BE PROTRAYED AS MARTYRS."
END TEXT.
STEDMAN
UNQUOTE VANCE.

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